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From: Commanding Officer, USS LEXINGTON (CVS 16)
To: Chief of Naval Operations (OP-05A5G)

Subj: Command Histories; submission of

Ref: (a) OPNAVINST 5720.12

Encl: (1) Command History

1. In accordance with reference (a), enclosure (1) is submitted.

WAYNE E. HAMMETT

Copy To:

Chief of Naval Operations (OP-09B9)

Commander Naval Air Force, U. S. Atlantic Fleet

LEXINGTON is homeported at the Naval Air Station, Pensacola, Florida, and is the training carrier for basic, advanced, and fleet qualifications. LEXINGTON is under the operational control of the Chief of Naval Air Training who delegates the control to the Chief of Naval Air Basic Training when in the Pensacola area and to the Chief of Naval Air Advanced Training when in the Corpus Christi, Texas area. During 1968 LEXINGTON was commanded by Captain E. W. Gendron.

To begin 1968, LEXINGTON put into Drydock Number 4 in Portsmouth, Virginia on the ninth of January for a three week stay.

All four of the ship's propellers and shafts were removed for maintenance. Two of the ship's 16 foot propellers were replaced and the other two rebalanced. All rope guards and coupling covers on the shafts were replaced and the missing dunce cap on number two propeller was replaced.

Stern tubes were repacked, boiler blowdown piping was replaced and all hull zincs were replaced.

Approximately 66 percent of the waterline was sandblasted and repainted along with much of the rest of the ship below the waterline.

On February 2nd LEXINGTON arrived at Mayport Naval Station to begin a six week RAV period.

The arresting gear, consisting of four engines, were completely torn down and reassembled. Fluid filter installations were installed, horizontal deck sheave covers replaced, and fluid stowage tanks were acid cleaned and replenished with new hydraulic fluid.

Both catapults were also completely overhauled during the RAV period. The water brake cylinders were realigned on both the port and starboard cats and new sealing strips and sheave stacks were installed on the starboard cat.

In other areas throughout the ship improvements were made including overhaul of the TACAN. Most of the ship's divisions assigned personnel to painting passageways and compartments and replacing tile on the decks.

While in Mayport, the USS LEXINGTON celebrated its Silver Anniversary on 17 February, 25 years after she was commissioned at the Bethlehem Steel Shipyards in Quincy, Massachusetts.

Festivities for the silver celebration included a stand-up buffet on the ship's foc'sle for Navy League directors, Naval dignitaries, civic leaders, and press. Captain Gendron then recounted the story of the history making World War II order to "Light up the fleet" given by VADM Mitcher on the bridge of the LEXINGTON at the first battle of the Phillipine Sea.

With the work completed, LEXINGTON departed Mayport on 16 March and headed for Pensacola and the continuation of her mission: the training of naval pilots.

The month of April was highlighted by a visit from the Inter-American Defense Board. Forty-seven officers from nineteen American Republics, including the United States, who make up the senior military planning organization in the Western Hemisphere spent a day aboard LEXINGTON to observe flight operations.

The purpose of the IADB is to provide plans for the common defense of the Western Hemisphere through coordinated efforts of the defense capabilities of member countries. The Board's home is in Washington D. C. and it meets on a continuing basis. In addition to the IADB, LEXINGTON has hosted approximately 37,550 guests during the year as part of the Civilian Orientation Cruise program.

In May LEXINGTON was sent to Mayport for another yard period. Broken gear teeth resulting from fatigue failure in the Number One reduction gear passed through the gear train causing a complete failure of that unit. Six tons of intermediate reduction gears were brought to the deck via a hoisting rig. The gears had more than likely not seen daylight since they were laid in place over twenty-five years ago. The "bull gear" connections were disconnected between main number one engine and the low pressure turbine. The main housing for the "bull gear" along with the gear itself was brought to the hangar deck. The housing alone weighs eleven tons.

The new gears that were installed were taken from a famous World War II veteran, the Franklin, which has not seen service since being severely damaged during the World War II.

When LEXINGTON emerged from Mayport Naval Station, August 6, her crew found that the number of pilots waiting to be qualified was a staggering figure.

Undaunted, the crew of the LEXINGTON rolled up their sleeves and pitched in to tackle the job, and ended up 18 days later with what has been termed "one of the busiest months in naval aviation history," averaging 321 landings on her deck every day.

While operating eighteen days in August in the Gulf of Mexico off Pensacola, Florida and Corpus Christi, Texas, LEXINGTON recorded 4,516 landings on her deck, made the 75,000th catapult off her starboard catapult and qualified or refreshed 726 pilots for carrier landings, a new record for LEXINGTON. The 25-year-old carrier also recorded her 216,000th through 220,000th landings, for a record ahead of any other carrier in the U. S. Navy.

On October 15 an emergency radio call for help was received by the U.S. Coast Guard from Captain Barnes of the 60-foot fishing boat, John R. Cook. Unknown to the struggling crew, the Coast Guard had relayed their "SOS" to the Naval Air Station at Pensacola asking for assistance in the search for the sinking boat.

The Naval Air Station determined that the closest assistance would have to come from the training carrier LEXINGTON which was located 45 miles from the sinking vessel. When the call went to the LEXINGTON the carrier halted its flight operations and headed for the stricken craft. She immediately sent two of her helicopters to the scene of the sinking vessel and readied two more for takeoff if necessary.

Upon arrival, the helicopters hovered over the boat and from winches on their sides lowered rescue seats. Individually, the seven crew members were hauled

aboard the helicopter. Once on the LEXINGTON they were taken to the ship's hospital where each was given a thorough physical examination and then fed hot meals and given dry clothes. During their stay the fishermen were taken on tours of the ship and invited to the bridge with Captain E. W. Gendron. The next day the crew went ashore as the LEX put into Pensacola.

LEXINGTON closed out 1968 with a trip to the Alabama Dry Dock and Shipbuilding Company at Mobile for the conversion to distillate fuel. She entered the channel on the morning of December 21st and after a five and one half hour sea detail, tied up to Pier Kilo at 1600. The LEXINGTON, a 910-foot, 44,000 ton Essex-class carrier, was the largest ship ever to negotiate the channel and enter the port of Mobile.

Additionally LEXINGTON has participated in such programs as the A-7B carrier suitability tests, the T-2B training movie, the Bomb Squad movie, the noise and vibration surveys by Phila., and the Fatigue Study by Naval Aerospace Medical Institute.

Despite the time spent on yard repairs, LEXINGTON managed to steam 42,216.11 miles which is equivalent to two trips around the earth at the equator. LEXINGTON's deck was the busiest one in the Navy as she reached a total of 233,480 landings while qualifying 3,407 aviators:

Basic	1489
Advanced	1409
Fleet	509

The Basic Training Command accounted for 2,858 touch and go landings and 8,009 arrested while the Advanced Training Command had 2,645 touch and go landings and 9,011 arrested. The cost of operations was \$6,171,500 or approximately \$247.00 per landing and \$147.00 per mile steamed.